

the only nesting record from India is Stewart's (Nidification iii, p. 423), who took four eggs from a hole in the bank of a small river in Travancore forest. Nests have been taken in Burma and at Bangkok, but though fairly common in the Malay Peninsula, the next nesting records are from Hongkong and Foochow.

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### 13.—NOTES ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF NESTING PADDY BIRDS (*ARDEOLA GRAYII*) IN KASHMIR.

(With two plates).

The Paddy Bird, Pond Heron or Blind Heron has had the good fortune of being rescued by 'Eha' from a somewhat drab obscurity with a sparkling phrase.<sup>1</sup> The bird is not uncommon in Kashmir where it breeds in the Vale in some numbers, nesting by or above water usually in willow trees. The main facts relating to its nidification are already well-known and need not be recapitulated here, although some notes elicited by a spell of watching the breeding bird in Kashmir this summer (1945) may be of interest.

During the breeding season, the Paddy Bird is by no means the 'silent bird' of Mr. Stuart Baker's *Fauna of British India*; instead, in the vicinity of its nesting site, it keeps up an incessant talking. A favourite call is a contented 'huh' varied with a sort of asking sound, a duo-syllabic 'yuck-kuck' like old men exclaiming in weak voices. In its breeding plumage, the Paddy Bird is extremely handsome, the head, in both sexes, developing a long pointed white crest; while the back is adorned with decomposed feathers of a rich maroon colour. Both crest and back feathers are used in display as will be described hereafter. The young, especially when clamorous for food, are also noisy keeping up a continual 'chick-chick-chick', a noise uttered by the young of other members of the heron tribe. A great part of the time is spent by the adults and the more grown-up young in a careful preening of the feathers principally of breast and wing. Both young and old, like the Darter, habitually vibrate the throat, the action having the effect of a pair of bellows which blow the small feathers adhering to the mandibles from constant preening, gently and flutteringly in an outward direction.

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<sup>1</sup> In his *Common Birds of Bombay*, Eha writes of the Paddy Bird, it 'is little persecuted and grows very familiar, allowing you to approach within a few paces before it suddenly produces a pair of snowy wings from its pockets and flaps away!—EDS.



Fig. 1. "Asking for more."



Photos by

Fig. 2. "— and yet more."

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